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Long et al.

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(54) **METHODS FOR EVALUATING CHEMICAL COMPONENTS BASED ON THEIR PROPOSED FUNCTION IN THE PRODUCT THEY ARE TO BE USED IN**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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(21) Appl. No.: **11/215,212**

(22) Filed: **Aug. 30, 2005**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
G06F 19/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **700/107; 700/106**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** **700/97, 700/106, 107, 266; 702/22; 705/8, 28, 29**
See application file for complete search history.

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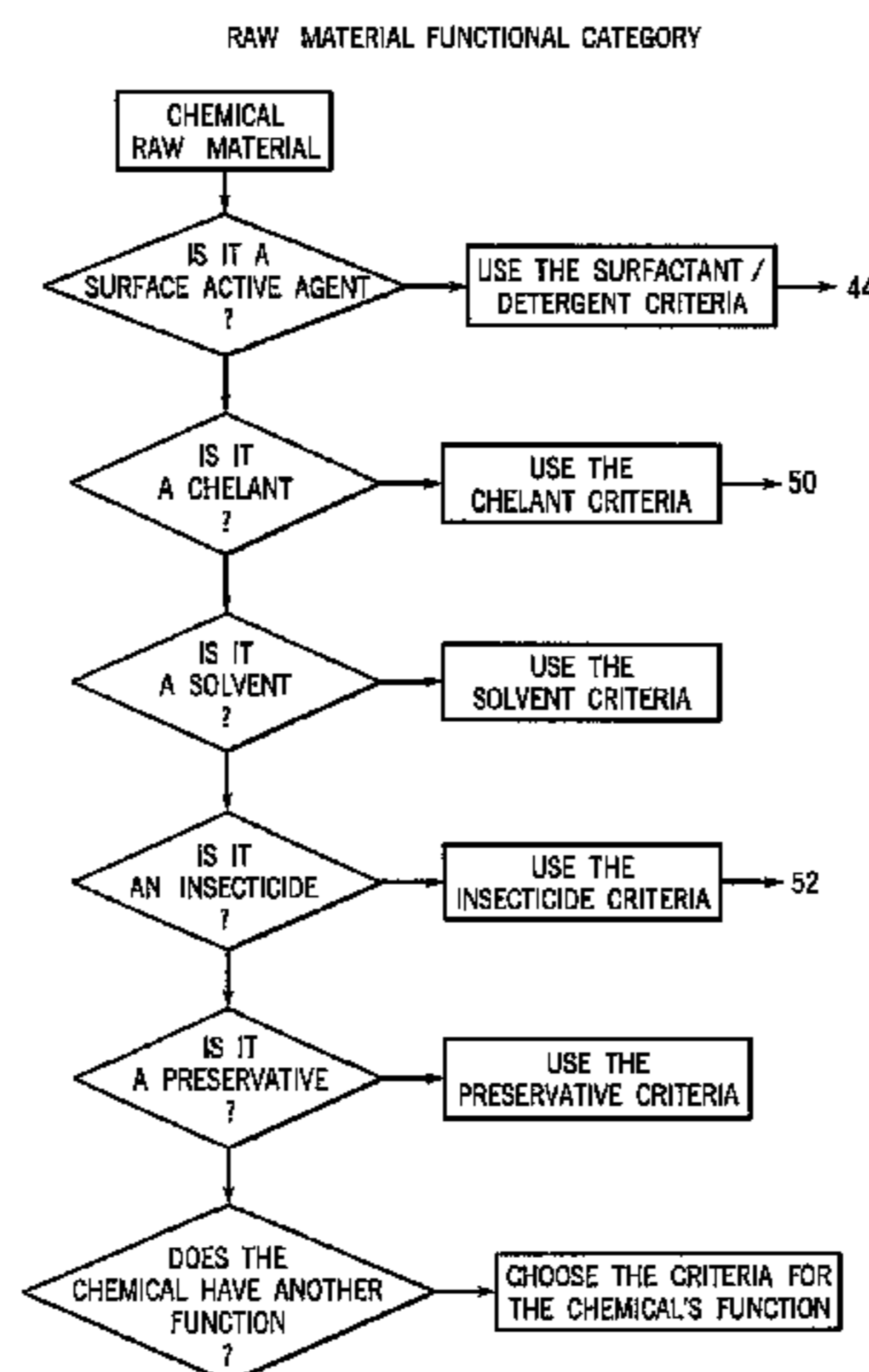
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Primary Examiner—Leo Picard
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Disclosed are methods for evaluating the environmental impact of various chemical components as a function of their proposed functional use in a chemical product, methods for formulating products based on those evaluations, and databases for assisting in those methods. Consumer products can be environmentally improved using these methods. Environmental criteria are in part developed based on the nature of the ultimate use of the product, and usually vary for a given chemical between types of proposed uses. The environmental classes for components are adjusted by their weight representation in the final product.

12 Claims, 13 Drawing Sheets



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RAW MATERIAL FUNCTIONAL CATEGORY

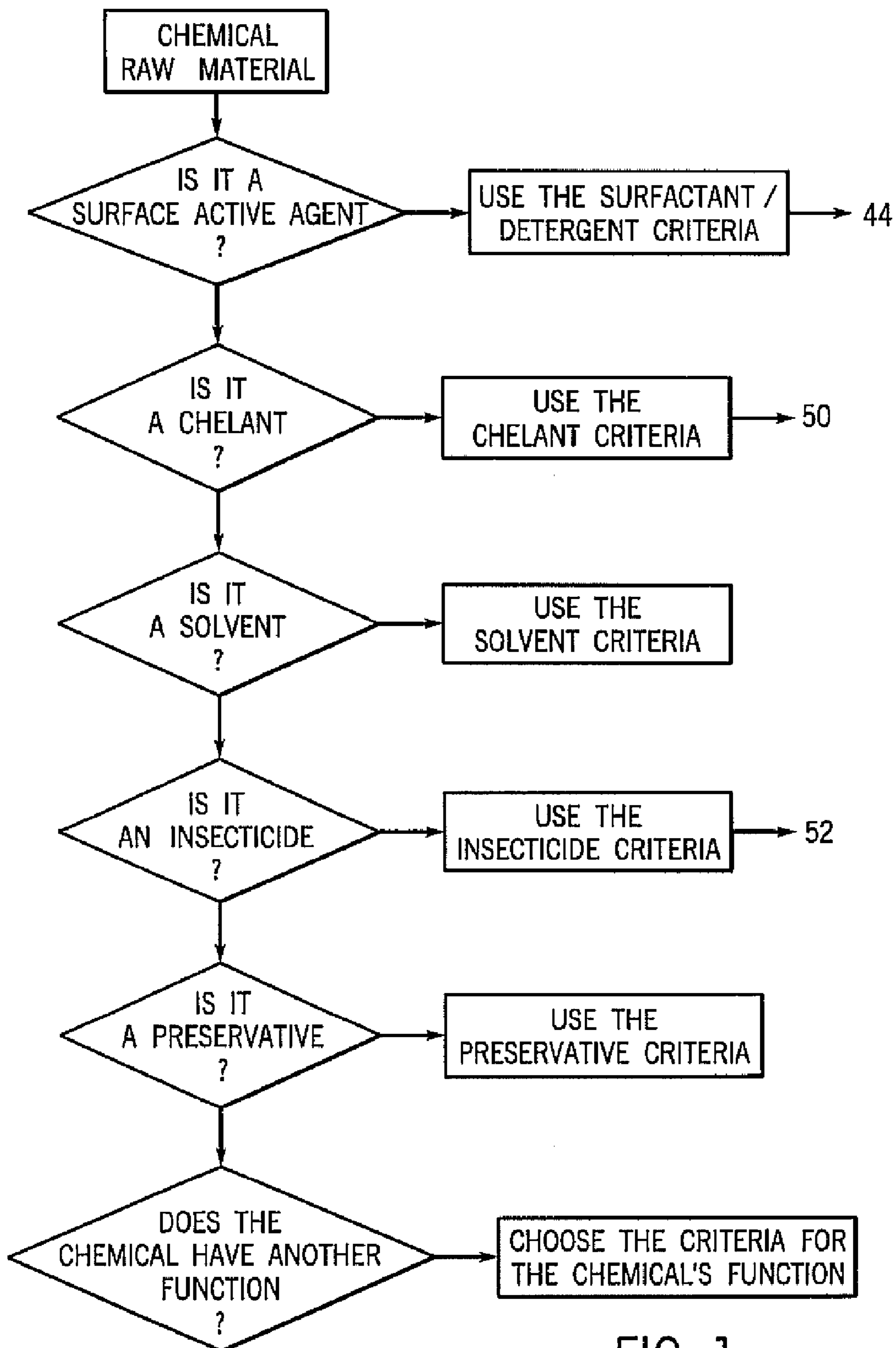
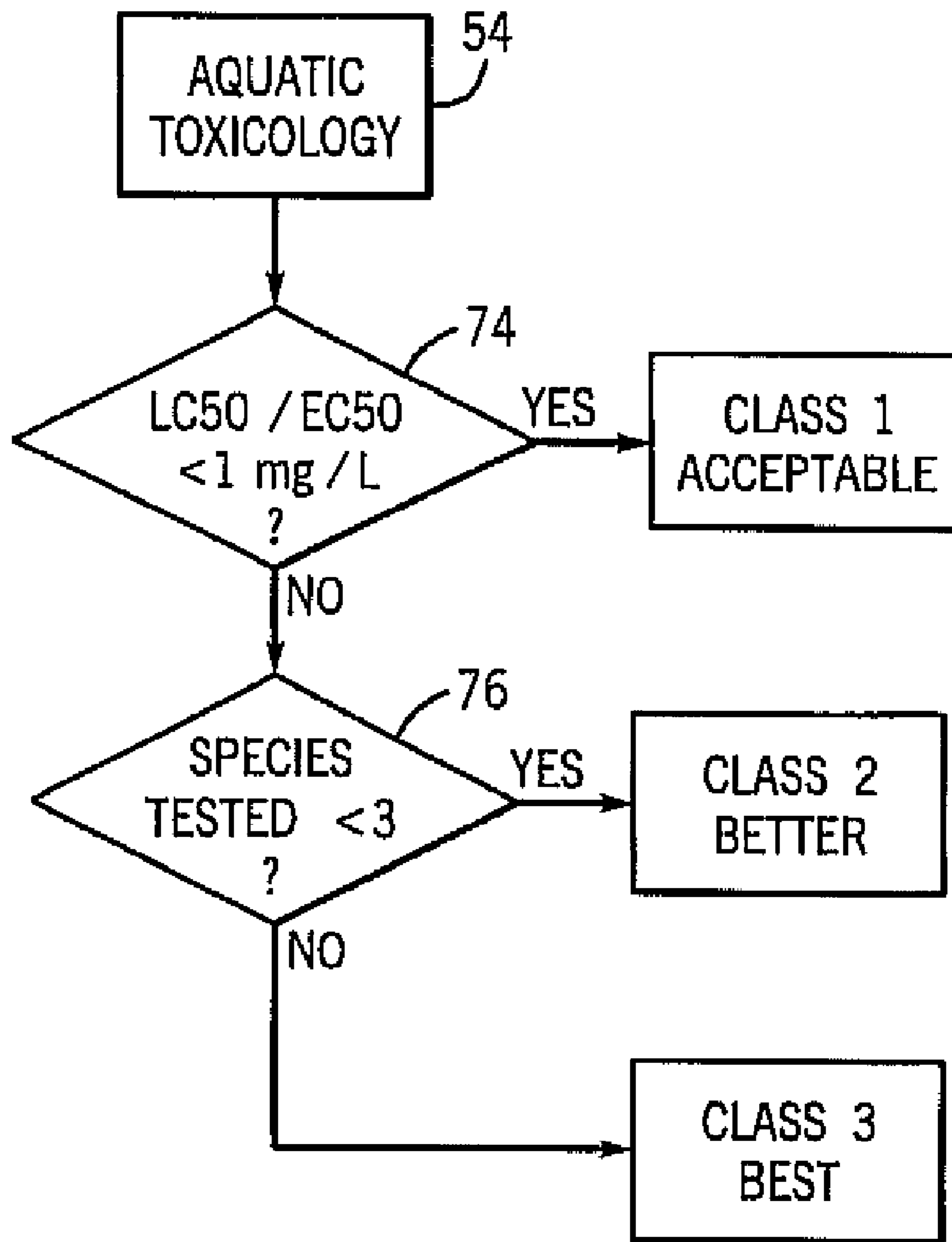
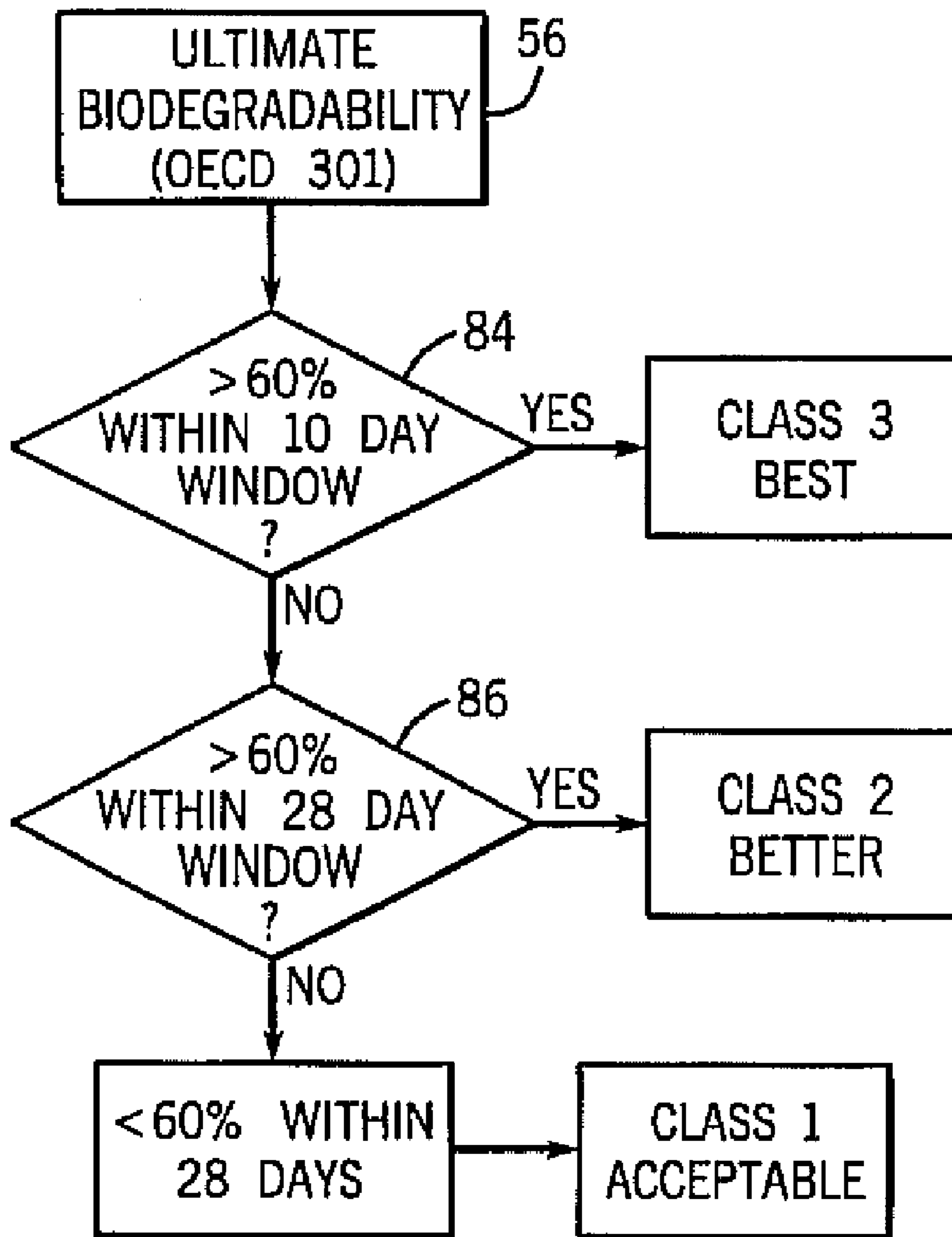


FIG. 1



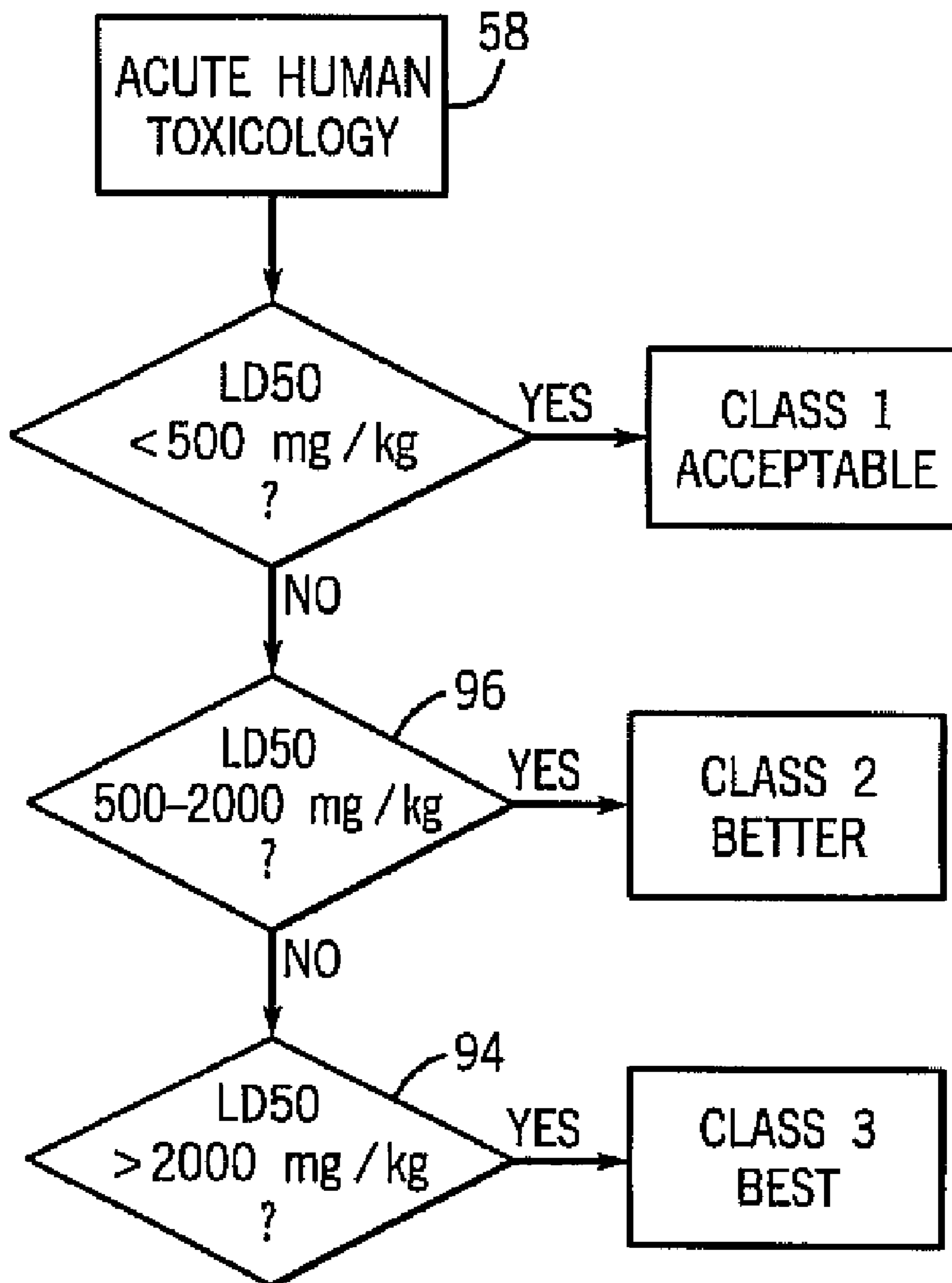
SURFACTANT CATEGORY EXAMPLE

FIG. 2



SURFACTANT CATEGORY EXAMPLE

FIG. 3



SURFACTANT CATEGORY EXAMPLE

FIG. 4

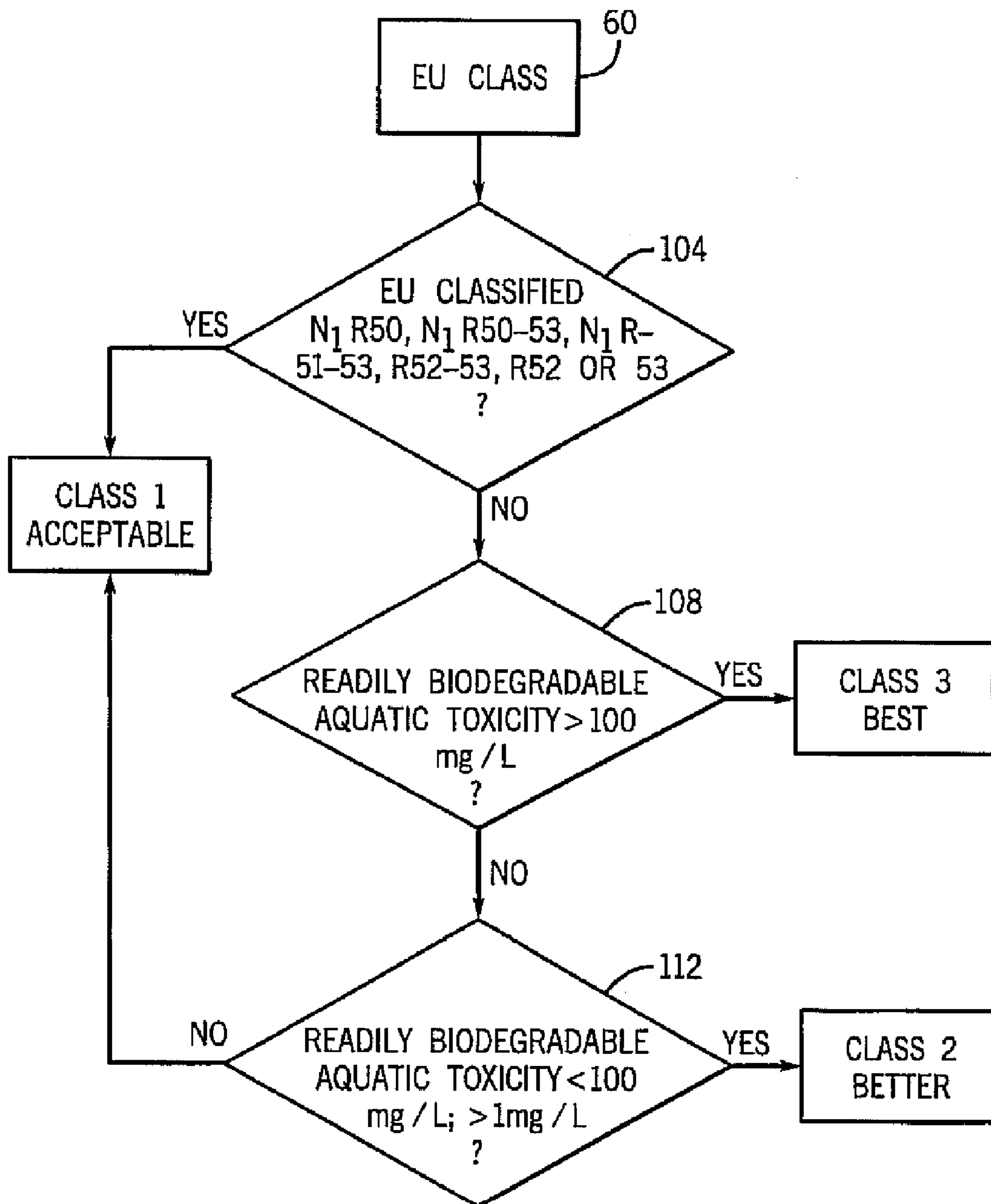


FIG. 5

SURFACTANT CATEGORY EXAMPLE

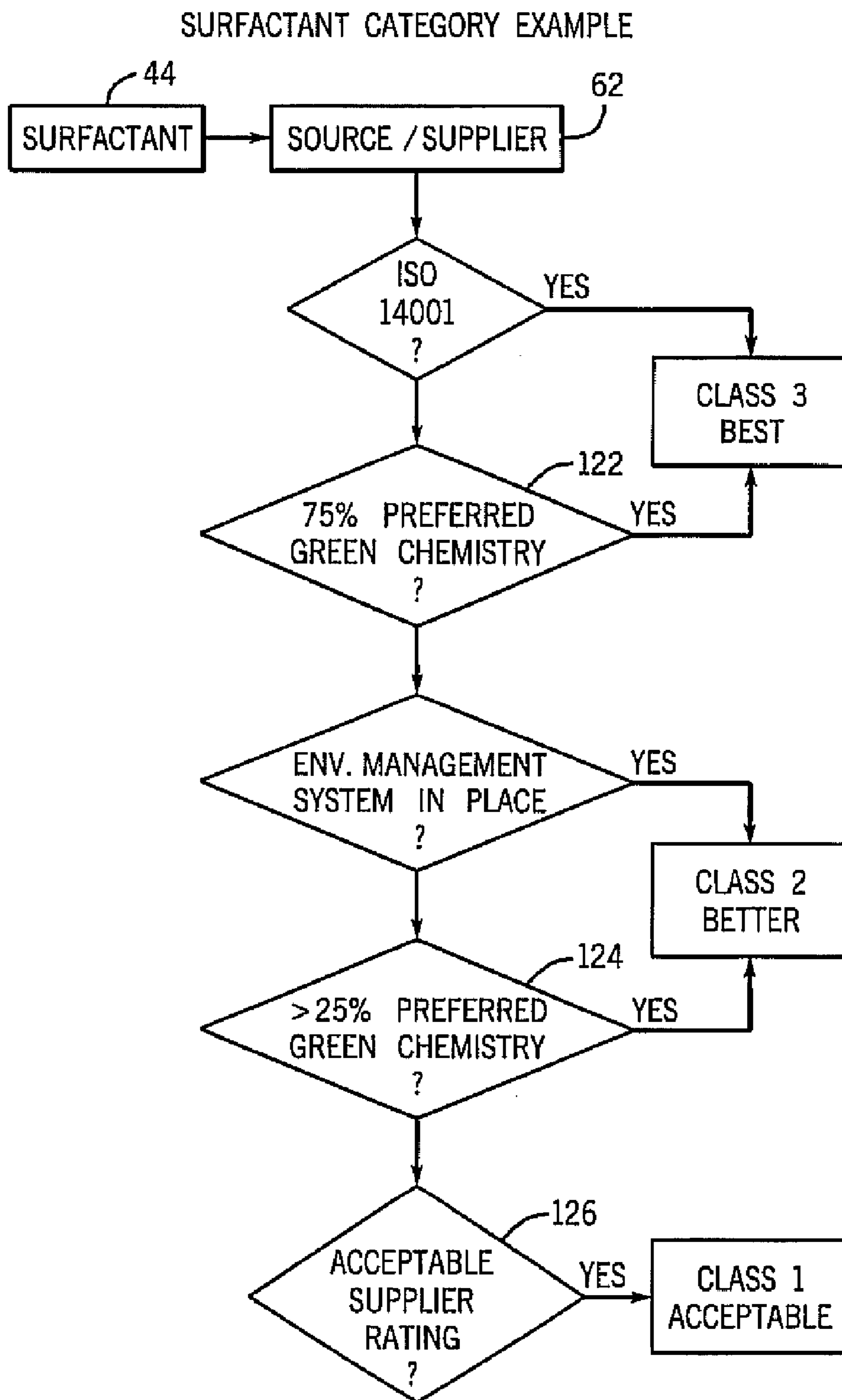


FIG. 6

GREENLIST™ PROCESS – SURFACTANT EXAMPLE

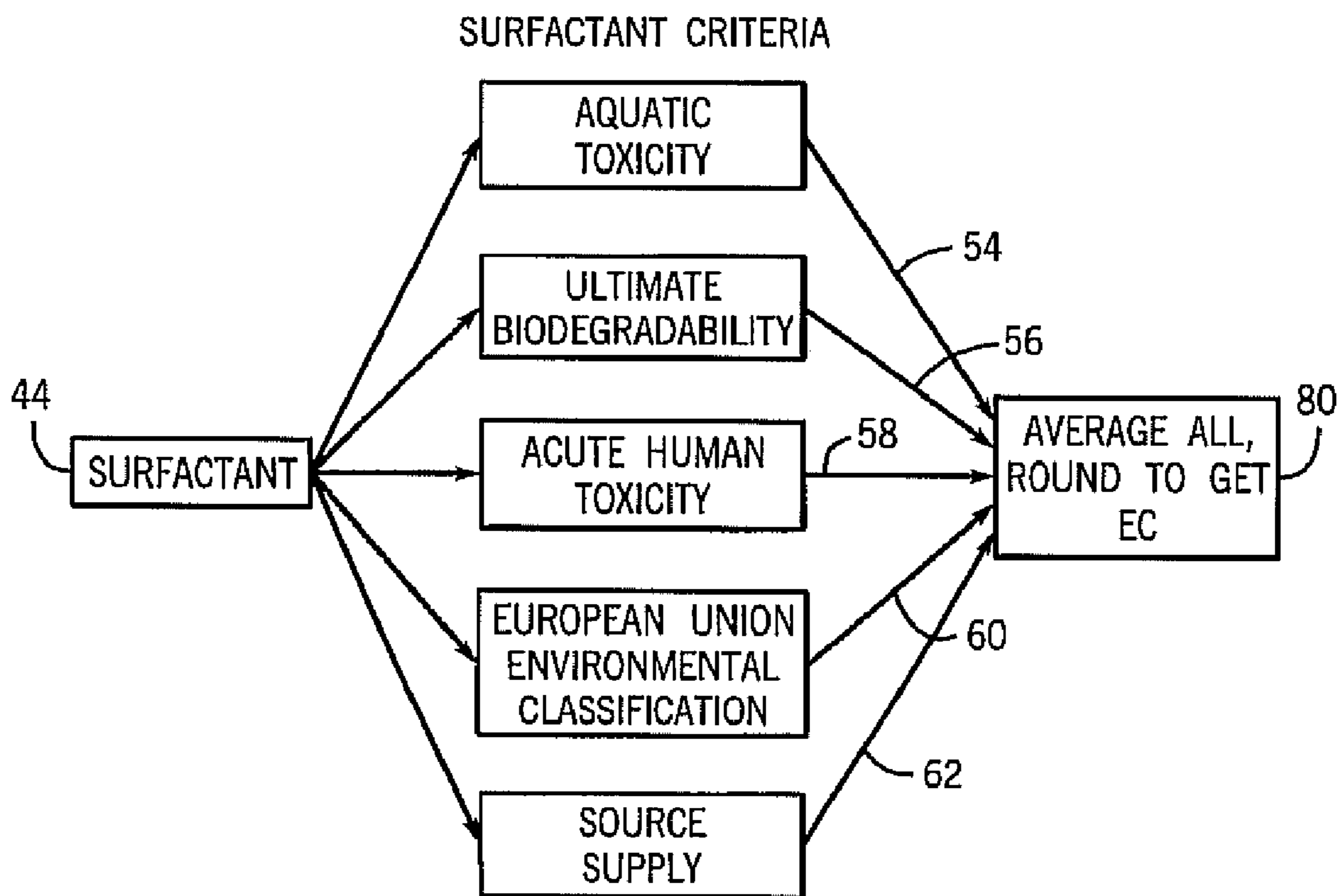


FIG. 7

OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS – SURFACANT EXAMPLE
(OSC)

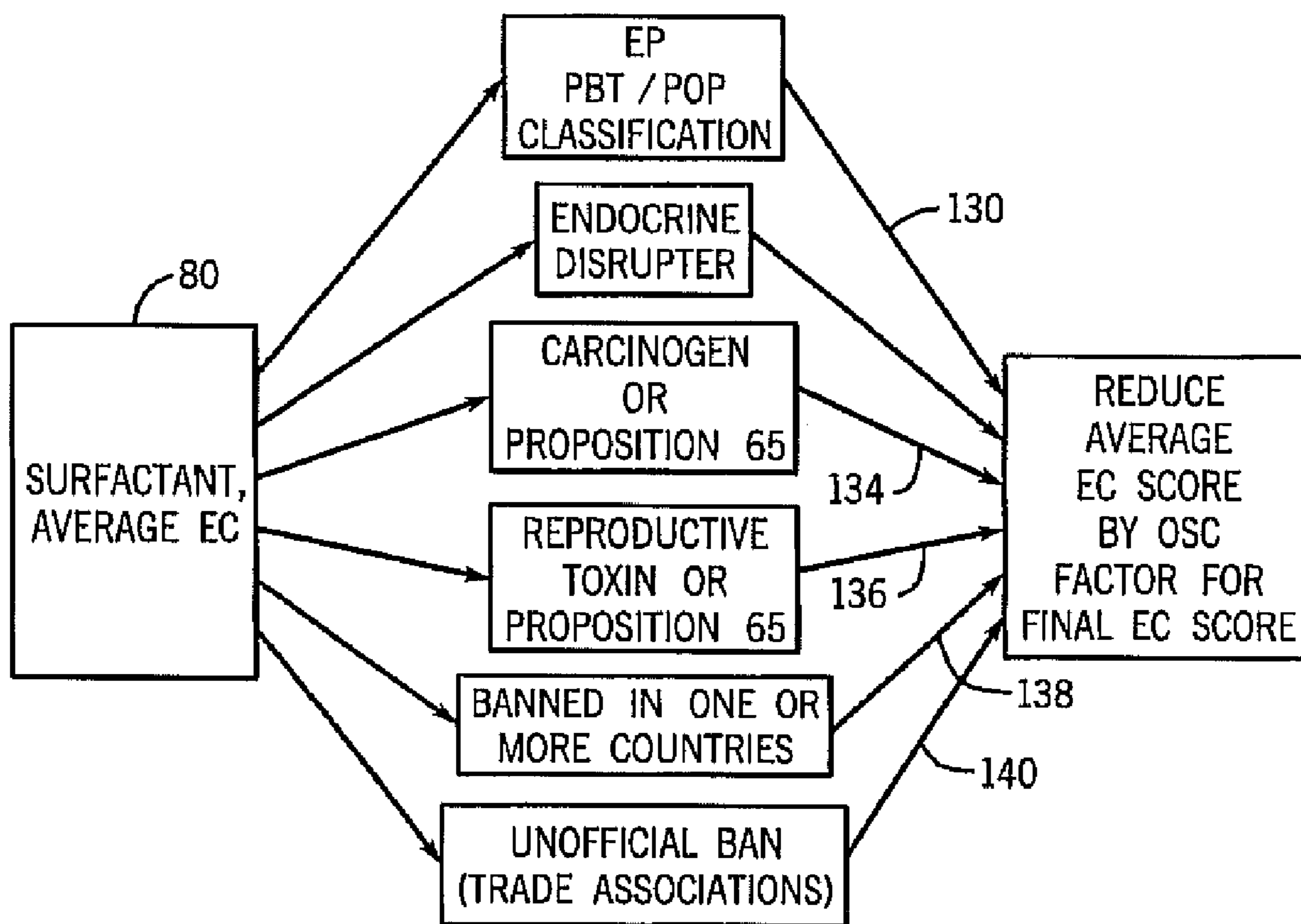


FIG. 8

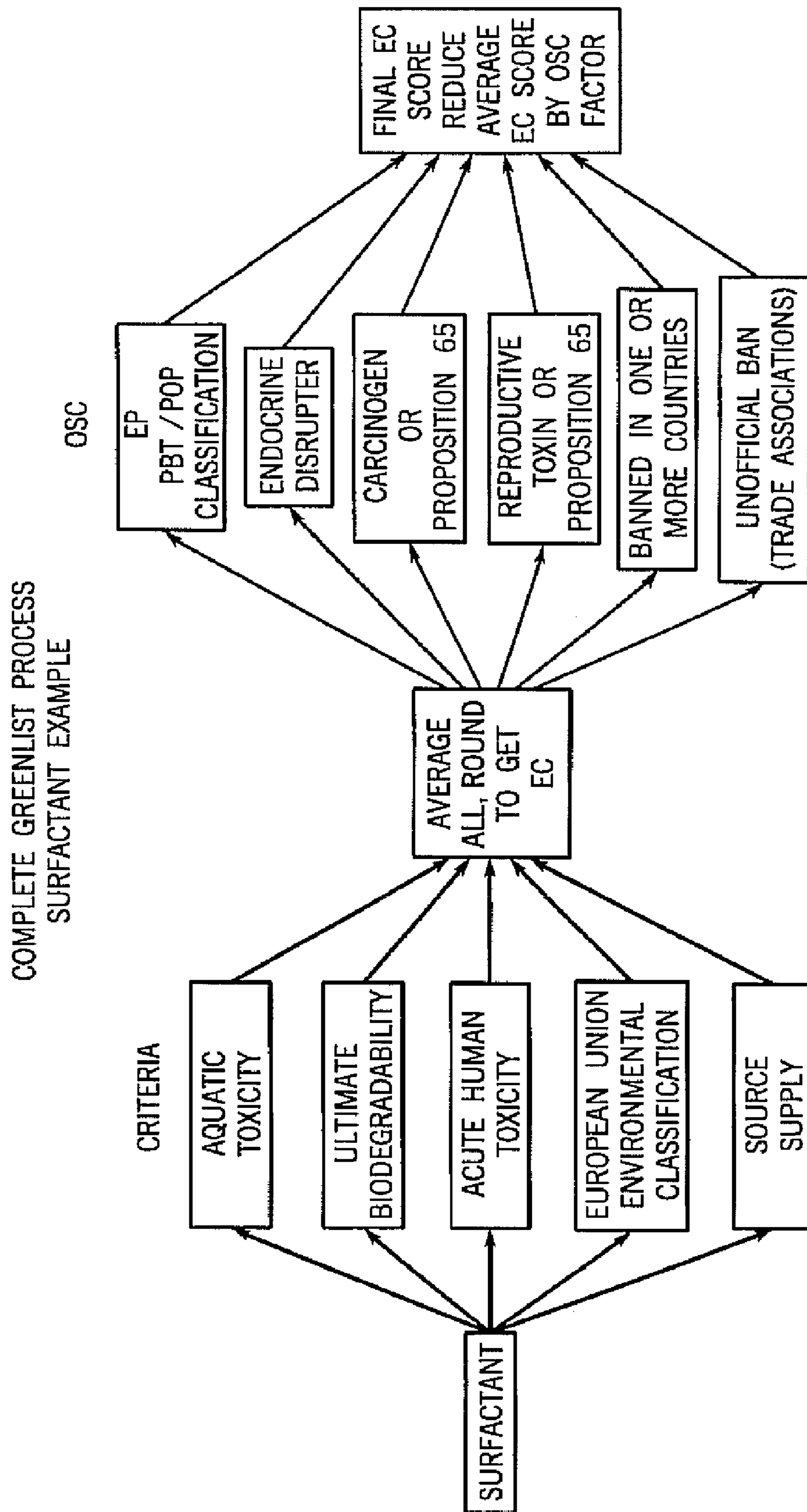


FIG. 9

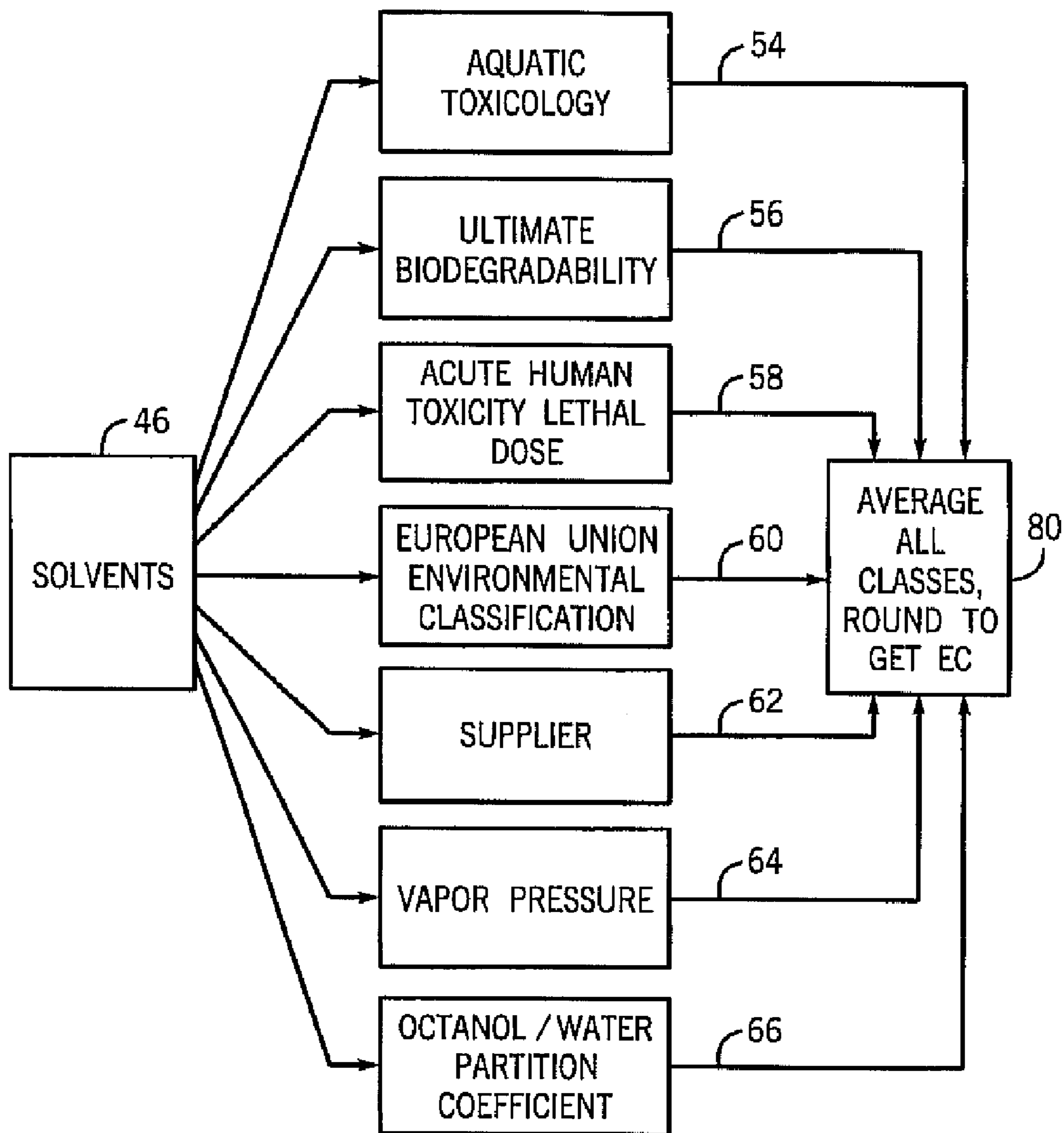


FIG. 10

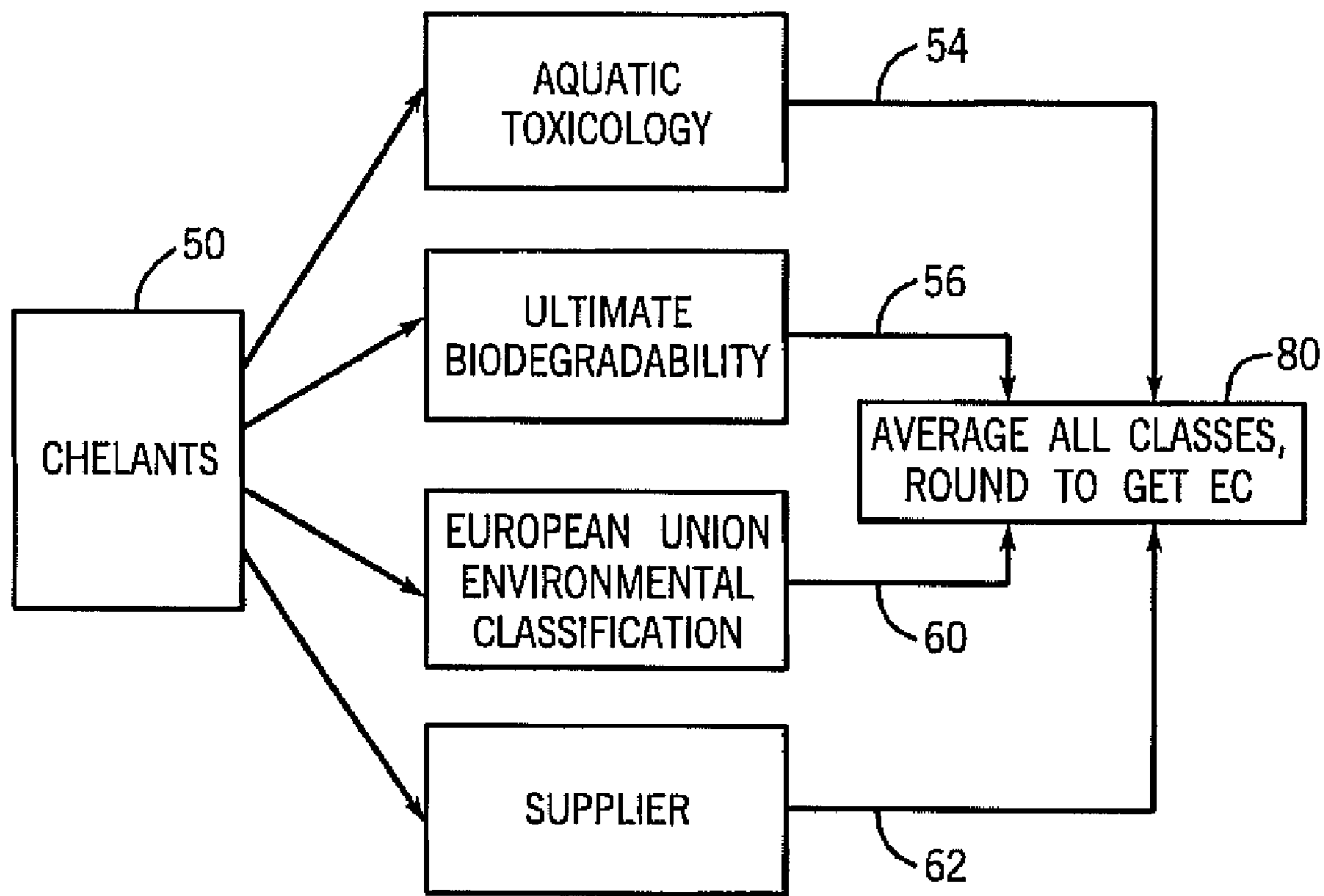


FIG. 11

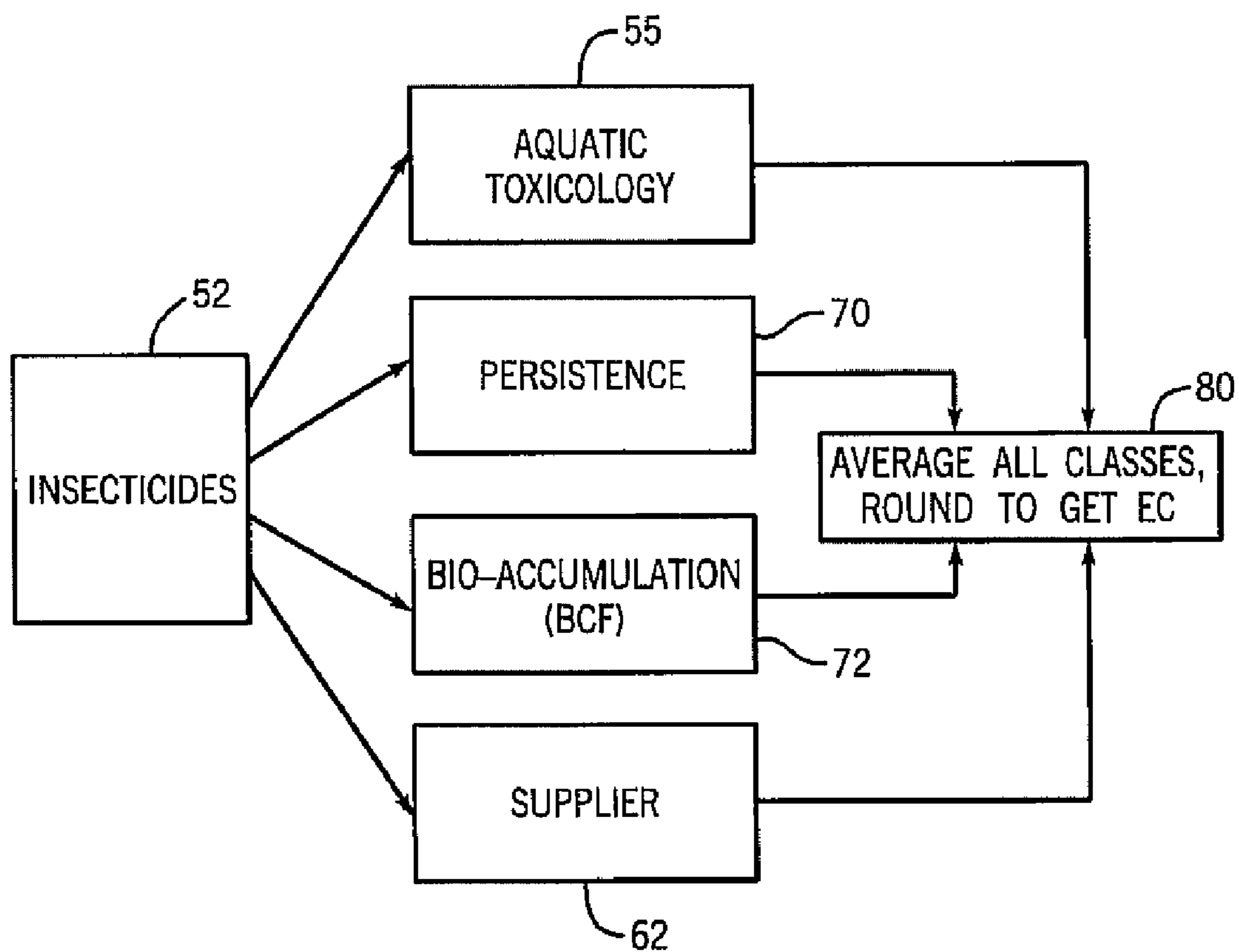


FIG. 12

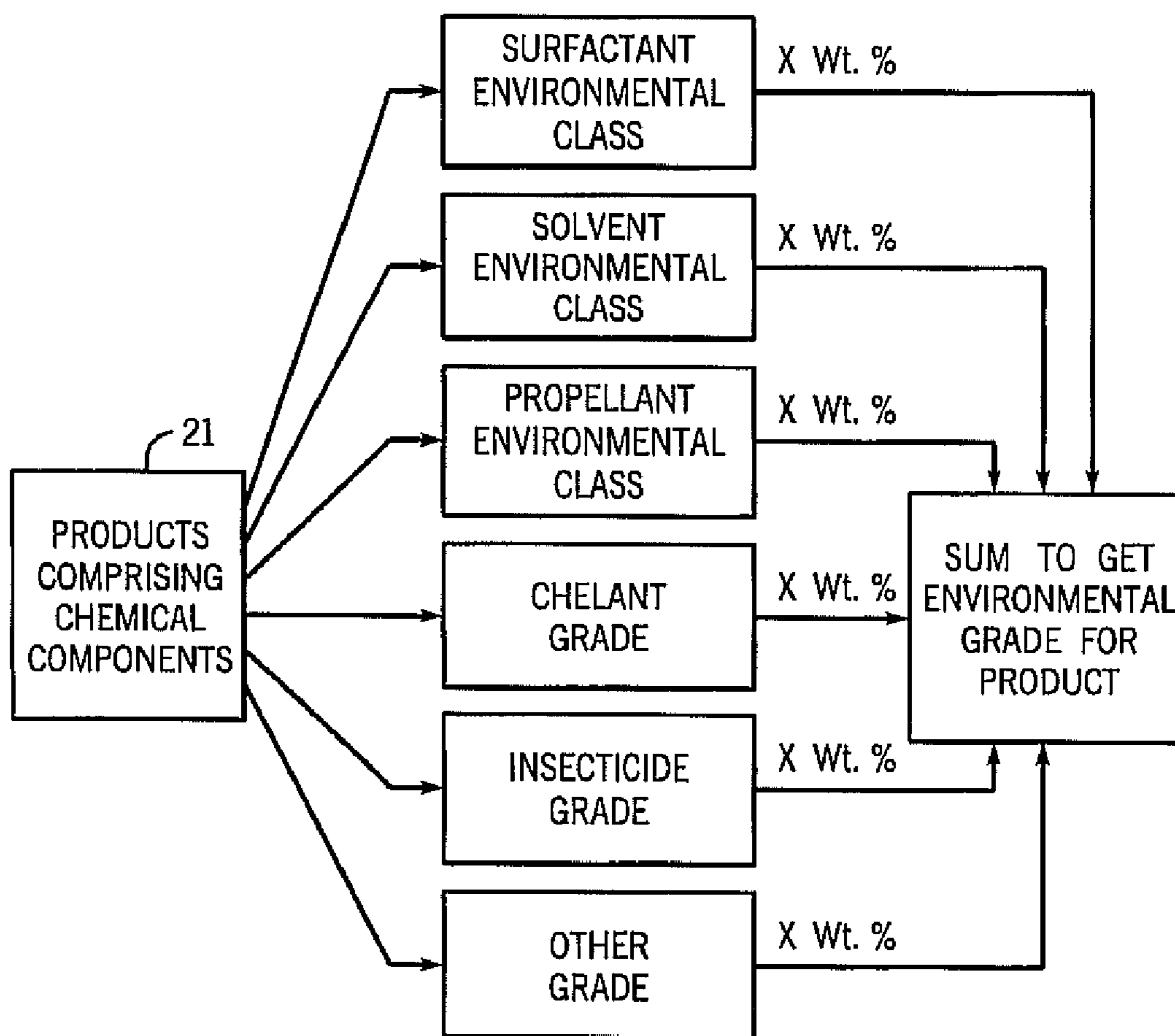


FIG. 13

1

**METHODS FOR EVALUATING CHEMICAL
COMPONENTS BASED ON THEIR
PROPOSED FUNCTION IN THE PRODUCT
THEY ARE TO BE USED IN**

**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS**

This is a divisional application of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/458,746 which was filed on Jun. 10, 2003, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,973,362 now allowed.

**STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY
SPONSORED RESEARCH/DEVELOPMENT**

Not applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to methods for producing products with reduced environmental "footprints". Such methods appear particularly useful in formulating consumer products such as cleaning chemicals, air care products, and home insecticides.

Many consumers have a preference for products which have (or are at least perceived by them to have) lesser adverse environmental impacts than other competing products. This is evidenced by the growth of the "organic" foods market, and the labeling of products with markings such as "environmentally friendly" or "green".

Apart from consumer preferences for environmentally friendly products, governments are increasingly regulating from an environmental standpoint the content of products, and in certain cases the additional responsibilities of companies during their manufacture, transportation and disposal. To insure the widest distribution and acceptance of their products, manufacturers therefore have good reason to take into account a wide variety of differing environmental legal requirements.

There are also other significant business reasons for formulating products with reduced environmental impacts. One such additional reason is to reduce the potential for future litigation if certain chemicals are mishandled (e.g. avoiding Superfund type issues).

The art has therefore begun to develop a number of different techniques for taking into account environmental issues when formulating products and acquiring their raw materials. In one approach the art has developed a public "grading system" of suppliers insofar as their environmental practices are concerned.

If a component is purchased from a company that follows strict environmental protection procedures, the impact on the environment from buying from that company may well be less than if the component is purchased from a company having a history of improper waste disposal. The environmental history of raw material supplier companies, and their current environmental procedures, are being taken into account by various agencies that assign suppliers environmental grades. These grades are made available to purchasing managers, who (all other things being equal or roughly equal) may make purchasing decisions based thereon.

Also known in the art are grading systems which grade possible adverse environmental effects of the resulting products. For example, the art has made a combined environmental impact ranking which factors in a variety of information such as defined toxicity criteria. Such systems are also known to be associated with certain seals of approval by

2

organizations having a perceived objective reputation regarding environmental matters.

However, these prior art systems typically grade a particular component without taking into account that a given component may have significantly different environmental impacts depending on the type of product it is to be used in, and what that product is to be used for. For example, phosphate used in a consumer cleaner intended to be flushed into the drain water supply by consumers would normally be perceived as environmentally undesirable due to foaming problems in rivers and the like, and the tendency of phosphates to increase undesired plant growth. However, the presence of a phosphate in certain industrial cleaners that are typically disposed in other ways could well have little adverse environmental impact.

Also known are systems which adjust the grades of input components of a product by their relative weight in that product. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 5,933,765 discloses an environmental grading system in which a product containing multiple components has each of its input components provided with a numerical score based on factors such as toxicity, ingredient bans, and legislative concerns. Each component is compared to a single published limit (such as a Dutch PPT Telecom standard) and a numerical value for that component is assigned.

The scores are then weighted based on the relative percentage weight of the raw material to provide an overall score for the resulting product. Again, only one possible score is provided for a given raw material chemical, regardless of application, albeit that score is weighted by prominence in the final product.

Thus, prior art environmental grading or rating systems do not provide an optimal system for formulating products, especially when a company develops a wide variety of different types of products having different applications, and some chemicals are used in more than one type of product.

To be commercially viable over the long term a product must meet certain cost and performance criteria, regardless of environmental attributes. Thus, in some cases environmental grading will not be the deciding factor. However, it is desired that a better system be developed for evaluating the environmental impact of chemical components and for formulating products having improved environmental characteristics for any given cost and performance criteria. Moreover, even where there are some differences in cost and performance between competing proposed formulas, such an improved environmental grading system is still desired as that will at minimum more meaningfully advise the formulator as to the nature of the trade-offs.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a method for formulating a product for a specified functional use. It involves:

- (a) obtaining two possible formulas for the product, each formula having at least two chemical components;
- (b) for each component, separately environmentally classifying an environmental impact of the component for the functional use for a formula by the following process:
 - (i) assigning that chemical component to a category based on a proposed functional use of the chemical component;
 - (ii) comparing that chemical component to at least two environmental category-specific criteria associated with that category;

3

(iii) assigning a class numerical value for each said criteria for that chemical component based on the result of the comparison; and

(iv) combining the class numerical values assigned to that chemical component for each of the category specific criteria associated with the category for that chemical component;

whereby the combination provides an overall environmental class for the chemical component for a formula;

(c) with respect to each component in the first formula multiplying its environmental class times a number representative of its relative weight presence in the first formula;

(d) summing the result of the step (c) multiplications for the chemical components in the first formula to provide an environmental grade for the first formula;

(e) with respect to each component in the second formula multiplying its environmental class times a number representative of its relative weight presence in the second formula;

(f) summing the result of the step (e) multiplications for the chemical components in the second formula to provide an environmental grade for the second formula; and

(g) comparing resulting environmental grades for the first and second formulas, and based at least in part on the comparison selecting a formulation for the product.

At least part of the method is not computer-implemented. For example, some of the steps could be done manually.

Each chemical component is initially assigned to a category based on a proposed functional use of the chemical component. The functional uses could include, for example, as a surfactant, solvent, propellant, antimicrobial, preservative, chelant, antioxidant, absorbent, thickener, lubricant, colorant, fragrance, corrosion inhibitor, builder, whitening agent, acid, insecticide, plasticizer, wax, polish or stabilizer.

Each chemical component is then compared to at least two environmental category-specific criteria associated with the category, and a class numerical value is assigned to the chemical component based on the result of the comparison for each criterion. This process is continued for each category-specific criterion associated with the selected category, and an average (or other combination) of the values is calculated for the chemical component to provide an overall environmental class for the chemical component.

The environmental classes determined for each of the chemical components in a chemical product can be multiplied by their relative weight presence in the product being formulated. The results for each component are then added together. The resulting combined "grade" provides an overall environmental grade for the product. The grades are then compared to make the selection of a formulation.

The criteria applied to the chemical components may, for example, reflect criteria selected from the group consisting of aquatic toxicology, biodegradability, acute human toxicity, European Union environmental classification, supplier rating, vapor pressure, water partition coefficient, propellant rating, aquatic toxicity, persistence, and bio-accumulation.

As an example, the aquatic toxicology criteria may reflect a comparison to a LC50 standard, the biodegradability criteria may reflect a comparison to an OECD 301 standard, the acute human toxicity criteria may reflect a comparison to an LD50 standard, the supplier criteria may reflect a comparison to an ISO 14001 environmental standard, the water partition coefficient criteria may reflect the degree of correlation with a level of toxicity and bio-concentration, the propellant criteria may reflect a rating of certain non-

4

hydrocarbon gasses as more favorable than hydrocarbon propellants, and the bio-accumulation criteria may reflect a comparison to fish BCF.

In a preferred form the bio-accumulation criteria is selected and reflects a comparison to fish BCF, or a category for both formulas is surfactants and the criteria for both formulas comprises an aquatic toxicology rating, a biodegradability rating, an acute human toxicity rating, and a European Union environmental classification rating.

In yet another preferred form a category for both formulas is insecticides and the criteria comprises an aquatic toxicity rating, a persistence rating, a bioaccumulation rating, and a supplier rating.

In another preferred form a category for both formulas is solvents and the criteria comprises an aquatic toxicology rating, a biodegradability rating, an acute human toxicity rating, a European Union environmental classification rating, a vapor pressure rating, and a water partition coefficient rating.

In another aspect the invention provides a method for environmentally classifying an environmental impact of a chemical component for a selected functional use. The method involves:

(a) assigning the chemical component to a category based on a proposed functional use of the chemical component;

(b) comparing the chemical component to at least two environmental category-specific criteria associated with the category;

(c) assigning a class numerical value for each said criteria based on the result of the comparison; and

(d) combining the class numerical values assigned to the chemical component for each of the category specific criteria associated with the category;

whereby the combination provides an overall environmental class for the chemical component;

wherein the environmental class for the chemical component reflects a numerical value representing at least two criteria selected from the group consisting of aquatic toxicology, persistence, biodegradability, acute human toxicity, European Union environmental classification, supplier rating, vapor pressure, water partition coefficient, propellant rating, aquatic toxicity, and bio-accumulation. At least part of the method is not computer-implemented. For example, some of the steps could be done manually.

In one form the biodegradability criteria is selected and reflects a comparison to an OECD 301 standard. In another form the acute human toxicity criteria is selected and reflects a comparison to a LD50 standard. In yet another form, the supplier rating criteria is selected and reflects a comparison to an ISO 14000 standard and other supplier rating criteria. In still another form the propellant rating criteria is selected and reflects a rating system that rates certain non-hydrocarbon gasses as more environmentally favorable than hydrocarbon propellants. In yet another form the category is chelants and the criteria comprises an aquatic toxicology rating, a biodegradability rating, an acute human toxicity rating, and a European Union environmental classification rating.

In yet another aspect the invention provides an environmental classification system database. One provides a database containing a plurality of categories of data representing classes of likely use of products to be evaluated. There is a first environmental class for a given chemical component present in a first of said categories as a part of the database. There is also a second environmental class having a different

value than the first, for that same chemical component, that is present in a second of said categories as a part of the database.

The database may be contained in a wide variety of different types of media desired. For example, it may be part of a book. Alternatively, it may be a computer database accessible by a software searching facility (e.g. a Lotus database).

In one embodiment a numerical grade for a component with respect to a class can be assigned such as 3, 2, 1 or 0 (with 3 being best and 0 being poor). Importantly, a component may have a 0 rating in one class of application (e.g. a biocide for a preservative), and may have a higher rating for another class of application (e.g. a biocide used in a disinfectant).

The present invention thus helps a company evaluate competing product formulas so as to take into account environmental concerns in a more ordered way. This is particularly valuable where two or more formulas are reasonably acceptable from a cost and performance standpoint.

An important advantage of the invention is that it permits a company to quickly modify the database criteria for each class as law and scientific knowledge develop (e.g. if a particular jurisdiction adopts a new regulation). Moreover, the system does not require that any particular chemical bear a "scarlet letter" for all purposes. Rather, it evaluates each chemical component from the standpoint of its ultimate use.

Moreover, the invention is capable of being automated, and even if implemented via manual means (e.g. a text and manual calculation) is easy to use and implement, at low cost. These and still other advantages of the present invention will appear from the following description. In that description reference is made to the accompanying drawings in which there is shown by way of illustration preferred embodiments of the invention. However, the claims should be looked to in order to judge the full scope of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a flow chart illustrating a selection of a functional category for a chemical;

FIG. 2 is a chart illustrating methods relevant to aquatic toxicology for surfactants;

FIG. 3 is a chart illustrating methods relevant to ultimate biodegradability for surfactants;

FIG. 4 is a chart illustrating methods relevant to acute human toxicity for surfactants;

FIG. 5 is a chart illustrating methods relevant to European Union classifications for surfactants;

FIG. 6 is a chart illustrating methods relevant to supplier categorization for surfactants;

FIG. 7 is a chart illustrating how a preliminary environmental class/grade ("EC") can be calculated using the primary criteria scores for surfactants;

FIG. 8 is a chart illustrating methods relevant to varying the EC based on special environmental concerns relevant to surfactants;

FIG. 9 is a chart summarizing the overall grading process for one chemical component;

FIG. 10 is a chart illustrating category-specific criteria for solvents;

FIG. 11 is a chart illustrating category-specific criteria for chelants;

FIG. 12 is a chart illustrating category-specific criteria for insecticides; and

FIG. 13 is a chart illustrating methods relevant to calculating an overall environmental score for a product.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

FIG. 1 depicts a flow chart illustrating a determination of a functional category for a chemical raw material. Initially, the chemical component is categorized in a category selected based on the functional use proposed for the component (e.g. a surfactant use 44).

For that category, the surfactant component is initially preferably compared to the five primary category-specific environmental criteria associated with the selected functional category (see FIGS. 2-6), and a "class" value indicating a level of environmental impact is assigned for each category-specific criteria for that chemical. An overall environmental class/grade for the chemical component is then preferably calculated as the sum of the class values for each of the category-specific divided by the number of category specific criteria to determine an average. Alternatively, the values could be otherwise combined, or could be weighted in some manner depending on the importance of each criteria for that application.

Although the environmental classification method could be used for any number of different functional categories, including, for example, solvents, propellants, chelants, and insecticides, the method will primarily be described hereafter with reference to criteria applied for use in a surfactant. Referring still to FIG. 1, for a surfactant 44, five different category-specific criteria are analyzed, and referring also to FIG. 8 an adjustment can optionally be made for "other factors" which are important to the environmental impact of chemical components in the selected category. As described, a numerical class value is assigned for each category-specific criteria.

The class values for each of the category specific criteria are then summed, and an average is calculated 80. The average can be adjusted based on the class specific criteria (130-140) shown in FIG. 8. Here, a class of 3 is assigned if the chemical component has only limited environmental impact as compared to the category-specific criterion, a class of zero is assigned if the chemical component has extremely significant impact, and grades of one and two are assigned for impact levels between these ends of the scale. Although the method is described with reference to this selected numerical scale, it will be apparent that alternative numerical scales, with or without weighting, can be provided.

The resulting environmental class for the chemical component can be used as a direct comparison for chemical components, or can be multiplied by its proposed weight and an environmental grade for a product determined as a sum of the scores of the chemical components multiplied by their relative weights in the product. One way of doing this is multiplying the scores by the percentage of presence of each component. Another is to multiply the percentages by 100 and use those for the multiplying. Still other techniques can be used to reflect weight presence.

Where all other factors are equal, the better overall environmental grade may be used as a determinative factor in selecting the final formulation. Where there are some significant differences in the cost or performance of the competing formulas, the environmental grade may be taken into account as an additional significant factor arguing for one formula over the other.

FIGS. 2-6 and 8 illustrate the category-specific criteria associated with surfactant 44, wherein the preferred criteria that are considered in the development of the environmental class for the surfactant category are noted. Here, the category-specific criteria include aquatic toxicology 54, ulti-

mate biodegradability **56**, acute human toxicity lethal dose **58**, European union environmental classification **60**, supplier/source **62**, and other significant concerns **130–140** can be factored in with respect to particular chemicals used.

Referring now specifically to FIG. **2** a flow chart illustrating the steps in analyzing the chemical component or raw material for the aquatic toxicology criteria **54** is shown. The aquatic toxicology **54** criteria is particularly useful in analyzing products which are disposed down a drain, which are used out-of-doors, and which can be spilled on or in land disposal sites either through runoff or leaching.

The test comprises comparing the raw material against a “lethal concentration to kill 50%” standard known in the art for providing a concentration of the raw material in test animals over a given time. For example, the LC50 comparison level **74** could be 1 mg/L. If the LC50 level of the raw material is less than 1 mg/L for a tested specie, the raw material can be assigned a numerical class value of one. If the LC50 rating is greater than 1 mg/L but the number of species tested is less than 3 (**76**), the raw material can be assigned a class of 2 for this criteria. Otherwise, if the LC50 rating is always greater than 1 mg/L and more than three species have been tested to reach this conclusion, the class can be 3.

Referring now to FIG. **3**, the ultimate biodegradability category-specific criteria **56** can be based on the half-life of the raw material, as defined in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 301 Standard. This criteria is mostly relevant to aquatic environmental affects but also correlates with half-lives on land. The raw material can be assigned a class of 3 if more than 60% of the material is biodegraded within a 10-day window (**84**) as described by the international standard OECD 301 test series. If not, but if more than 60% of the material is biodegraded within a 28-day window (**86**) it is assigned a class of 2. Alternatively, if less than 60% is biodegraded within 28 days the raw material is assigned a class of 1.

Referring now to FIG. **4**, the acute human toxicity **58** category-specific criteria defines a minimal parameter for potential toxicity to humans and is compared to a lethal dose standard, LD50, known in the art, for measuring short-term poisoning potential. The raw material can be rated as a class of 3 if the LD50 rating is greater than 2000 mg/kg (**94**). If the LD50 is instead between 500 and 2000 mg/kg (**96**) the raw material can be assigned a class of 2 for this category specific criteria. Otherwise it can be assigned a class of 1.

Referring now to FIG. **5**, the European Union environmental classification category-specific criteria can be determined based on ecological parameters defined in the European Union. To determine the class value assigned to the raw material with respect to this category-specific criteria, an analysis is first made to determine whether an adverse European class applies to the raw material (**104**). If no adverse class applies, and the raw material has an aquatic toxicity level greater than 100 mg/L and the raw material is readily biodegradable (**108**), the raw material can receive a class of 3.

If the aquatic toxicity is less than 100 mg/L but greater than 1 mg/L and it is readily biodegradable (**112**), it can receive a class of 2. However, if any European Union classification N, R50; N, R50-53, N, R51-53, R52-53, R52, or R53 applies, the raw material can be assigned a class of 1.

In the European Union Classification system, the R50 criteria indicates that the raw material is very toxic to aquatic organisms, the European Union R51 classification indicates that the material is toxic to aquatic organisms, the R52

classification indicates that the material is harmful to aquatic organisms, and the R53 indicates that the material may cause long-term adverse effects in an aquatic environment.

Referring now to FIG. **6**, a supplier criteria **62** for evaluating adverse environmental impact due to the supplier is based on the ISO 14001 standard of the International Standard Organization. If the supplier is ISO 14001 certified, the supplier is automatically assigned a class of **3**. If the supplier is not ISO 14001 certified, but more than 75% of the raw material supplied by the supplier is classified as a “preferred” raw material (**122**), the supplier can still be graded as a class 3.

If not, but if more than 25% of the raw material supplied by the supplier is preferred (**124**), a class of 2 can be applied, or if less than 25% of the raw material is preferred (**126**), a class of 1 can be applied with another indicator of good environmental characteristics. Otherwise, a class of 0 can be applied.

Referring now to FIG. **7**, the five main sub-grades **54**, **56**, **58**, **60** and **62** can be averaged to yield an EC or grade **80**. Then, the chemical component may also be evaluated for other concerns based on the selected functional category, as shown in FIG. **8**. For surfactants **44**, these concerns include EPA (“EP”) persistent bioaccumulative toxin (PBT)/persistent organic pollutant (POP) classifications (**130**), endocrine disruptors (**130**), carcinogenicity as defined, for example, in California proposition **65** (**134**), reproduction toxins as defined, for example, in California proposition **65** (**136**), a determination as to whether the chemical component has been banned in one or more country (**138**), and whether any unofficial bans, such as a ban by a trade association (**140**), has been applied to the chemical component under test. If any of these factors apply, environmental class/grade determined by the averaging process (**80**) of FIG. **1** is reduced (e.g. by one).

FIG. **9** summarizes the surfactant grading process noted above.

Referring next to FIGS. **10–13**, other possible chemical analysis categories and the associated category-specific criteria are shown. FIG. **10** shows the associated criteria, albeit for the development of environmental classes for solvents. Here, additional analyses for vapor pressure **64** and octanol/water partition coefficient **66** are used for criteria.

Referring to FIG. **11**, chelants **50** can be graded based on aquatic toxicology **54**, biodegradability **56**, European Union environmental classification **60**, and supplier classification **62**, each of which are described above. In this category other significant concerns which might merit reduction of the environmental class (as shown in FIG. **8**) include raw materials which tend to mobilize heavy metals in the environment, carcinogenicity, meet the EPA criteria for classification as a persistent bioaccumulative toxin (PBT)/allergy/sensitization, have treatogenicity or reproductive effects, are banned in one or more countries, or are banned unofficially by trade associations or the like.

FIG. **12** shows an insecticide **52** in which relevant criteria are aquatic toxicity **55**, persistence **70**, bio-accumulation Bio-concentration Factor (BCF) **72**, where BCF is a measure of the ratio of concentration of a chemical inside an organism to the concentration in the surrounding environment, and supplier rating **62**. In the insecticide category other significant concerns which may cause a reduction in the grade are a future EPA classification of persistent bioaccumulative toxin (PBT)/persistent organic pollutant (POP), endocrine disruption, indicated neural toxicity, or banning in one

or more countries or unofficially by a trade association. Also important in this category are children's health or carcinogenicity issues.

Although not shown, propellants may be graded by an initial rating formed from a determination if the propellant comprises just compressed air, nitrogen or CO₂ (which merits the highest rating), or if it is hydrocarbon (which merits a middle rating), or if it is a more problematic gas such as CFC or HFC (which merits a lower rating).

Referring now to FIG. 13, for a proposed chemical product 21, the environmental class determined for each chemical raw material as categorized in a selected functional category is multiplied by the weight of the chemical component or raw material in the product, and the resultant values are summed to provide an environmental grade for the overall product.

The following Tables I and II propose two different formulations for consideration as hard surface cleaners. In each case, the environmental class (computed by summing the criteria and dividing by the number of criteria) is multiplied by the percentage of the component. The Table II formula can be seen as being indicated as more environmentally friendly.

TABLE I

Raw Materials	Percentage	Environ. Class	Environmental Grade
Deionized water	66.81818	3	200.454
Tetrasodium sale of EDTA, 40%	19.63636	0	0
Glycol ether	10.90909	3	32.7272
Nonylphenol ethoxylate	1.36364	0	0
Disinfectant	0.49091	1	0.49091
Co-surfactant	0.36364	1	0.36364
PH adjuster	0.23636	0	0
Fragrance	0.18182	1	0.18182
Total Percentage	100		
Overall Grade			234.218

TABLE II

Raw Materials	Percentage	Environ. Class	Environmental Grade
Deionized water	66.81818	3	200.454
Biodegradable chelant	19.63636	3	58.9090
Glycol ether	10.90909	3	32.7272
Alcohol ethoxylate	1.36364	2	2.72728
Disinfectant	0.49091	1	0.49091
Co-surfactant	0.36364	1	0.36364
Organic pH adjuster	0.23636	1	0.23636
Fragrance	0.18182	1	0.18182
Total Percentage	100		
Overall Grade			296.090

The overall environmental grade of the product can also be listed on product labels to be used by consumers to make more informed decisions between competing products. For example, instead of producing only one product, a company might produce both a high strength formula with some environmental issues, and a low strength formula with a lesser set of environmental issues, leaving it to the consumer to make the trade-off after reading the labeling information.

To simplify determining the environmental grade of the product, a database can be constructed in which the envi-

ronmental class associated with the chemical component for a given functional categories or for all defined functional categories is stored. Depending on the use of the chemical component, a previously-determined environmental class value, calculated as described above, can be retrieved from the database. The environmental class is then multiplied by the weight of the chemical component in a proposed product. To determine an environmental grade for a chemical product, this process would be repeated for all of the chemical components in the product, and the results of the multiplications summed to provide the environmental grade, as described above. The database information could be stored in a book form, or as part of a computerized data storage device.

Although preferred embodiments have been described, it will be apparent that a number of revisions could be made within the spirit and scope of the invention. In this regard, although a grading system noted above assigns each component a collective grade based on summing the criteria divided by the number of criteria, with a 0 to 3 scale for each sub-criteria (with the higher numbers being more environmentally friendly), other numerical approaches could be used.

For example, the lower numbers for each criteria could be the ones assigned the environmentally friendly attributes. Also, the number scale could be 1-100, or otherwise different. Accordingly, the claims should be referred to in order to determine the full scope of the invention.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

The invention provides grading systems for environmentally grading components, and formulas that incorporate them. Such grading systems provide methods for selecting formulations with improved environmental characteristics.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method for formulating and producing a product for a specified functional use, comprising:

- (a) obtaining two possible formulas for the product, each formula having at least two chemical components;
- (b) for each component, separately environmentally classifying an environmental impact of the component for the functional use for a formula by the following process:

- (i) assigning that chemical component to a category based on a proposed functional use of the chemical component;
- (ii) comparing that chemical component to at least two environmental category-specific criteria associated with that category;
- (iii) assigning a class numerical value for each said criteria for that chemical component based on the result of the comparison; and
- (iv) combining the class numerical values assigned to that chemical component for each of the category specific criteria associated with the category for that chemical component;

whereby the combination provides an overall environmental class for the chemical component for a formula;

- (c) with respect to each component in the first formula multiplying its environmental class times a number representative of its relative weight presence in the first formula;
- (d) summing the result of the step (c) multiplications for the chemical components in the first formula to provide an environmental grade for the first formula;

11

(e) with respect to each component in the second formula multiplying its environmental class times a number representative of its relative weight presence in the second formula;

(f) summing the result of the step (e) multiplications for the chemical components in the second formula to provide an environmental grade for the second formula; and

(g) comparing resulting environmental grades for the first and second formulas, and based at least in part on the comparison selecting a formulation for the product and producing a product based on that formulation; wherein the method is performed at least in part without the assistance of a computer.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the combined class numerical values for at least one component are further adjusted to reflect other environmental concerns specific to the functional category.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one category is selected from the group consisting of a surfactant category, a solvent category, a preservative category, a fragrance category, an organic acid category, an inorganic acid category, a dye category, a wax category, a propellant category, a chelant category, and an insecticide category.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the environmental class for at least one chemical component reflects a numerical value representing at least two criteria selected from the group consisting of aquatic toxicology, persistence, biodegradability, acute human toxicity, European Union environmental classification, supplier rating, vapor pressure, water partition coefficient rating, propellant rating, aquatic toxicity, and bio-accumulation.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the aquatic toxicology criteria is selected and reflects a comparison to a LC50 standard.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the bio-accumulation criteria is selected and reflects a comparison to fish BCF.

7. The method of claim 4, wherein a category for both formulas is surfactants and the criteria for both formulas comprises an aquatic toxicology rating, a biodegradability rating, an acute human toxicity rating, and a European Union environmental classification rating.

8. The method of claim 4, wherein a category for both formulas is solvents and the criteria comprises an aquatic toxicology rating, a biodegradability rating, an acute human toxicity rating, a European Union environmental classification rating, a vapor pressure rating, and a water partition coefficient rating.

9. The method of claim 4, wherein a category for both formulas is insecticides and the criteria comprises an aquatic toxicity rating, a persistence rating, a bioaccumulation rating, and a supplier rating.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the method is performed without the assistance of the computer.

11. A method for environmentally classifying an environmental impact of a chemical component for a selected functional use, and using that classifying to assist in production of a chemical product, the method comprising:

assigning the chemical component to a category based on a proposed functional use of the chemical component;

12

comparing the chemical component to at least two environmental category-specific criteria associated with the category;

assigning a class numerical value for each said criteria based on the result of the comparison; and

combining the class numerical values assigned to the chemical component for each of the category specific criteria associated with the category;

whereby the combination provides an overall environmental class for the chemical component;

wherein the environmental class for the chemical component reflects a numerical value representing at least two criteria selected from the group consisting of aquatic toxicology, persistence, biodegradability which reflects a comparison to an OECD 301 standard, acute human toxicity which reflects a comparison to a LD50 standard, European Union environmental classification, supplier rating which reflects a comparison to an ISO 14000 standard and other supplier rating criteria, vapor pressure, water partition coefficient, propellant rating which reflects a rating system that rates certain non-hydrocarbon gasses as more environmentally favorable than hydrocarbon propellants, aquatic toxicity, and bio-accumulation;

wherein the environmental classifying is used to assist in formulating and thereafter producing a chemical product; and

wherein the method is performed at least in part without the assistance of a computer.

12. A method for environmentally classifying an environmental impact of a chemical component for a selected functional use, and using that classifying to assist in production of a chemical product, the method comprising:

assigning the chemical component to a category based on a proposed functional use of the chemical component;

comparing the chemical component to at least two environmental category-specific criteria associated with the category;

assigning a class numerical value for each said criteria based on the result of the comparison; and

combining the class numerical values assigned to the chemical component for each of the category specific criteria associated with the category;

whereby the combination provides an overall environmental class for the chemical component;

wherein the environmental class for the chemical component reflects a numerical value representing at least the following criteria of aquatic toxicology rating, biodegradability rating, acute human toxicity rating, and European Union environmental classification rating;

wherein the category is chelants;

wherein the environmental classifying is used to assist in formulating and thereafter producing a chemical product; and

wherein the method is performed at least in part without the assistance of a computer.